

## Oral history with 84 year old black female, Joiner, Arkansas (Transcription)

<start?> <unintelligible text> B (1)

Q: What saw mills did your father work for?

A: Mr. Bozey James Log Camp. That wasn't Mr. Jimmy Archie, that was his grandpaw.

Q: Where were they clearing land?

A: Back out yonder over here. It was back out here not too far from Joiner, way back there.

O: Did they cut it right on the spot? Did they have a little portable mill they took around with them?

A: No sir, I will tell you what they were doing. They were cutting them logs and then putting them on a log wagon and have oxen to haul them.

Q: And where did they haul them?

A: I don't know, sir.

Q: Did your father drive any of the ox teams.

## Library of Congress

A: No sir, he filed saws and worked in cutting trees.

Q: So you picked cotton?

A: Yes sir, picked cotton.

Q: Did you get to go to school any?

2

A: Not nary a day.

Q: Were there other children in your family?

A: Yes sir, we had some more children. Mama had some more children, and they went to school. But I had to pick and try to help make a living.

Q: Were you the oldest child?

A: No sir, I had a sister older than me. Me and her had to work for a living. Course I worked around here after I got up some in size, around here in Joiner. But I picked cotton and washed and ironed for different white people.

Q: How many pounds of cotton could you pick in a day?

## Library of Congress

A: Sometimes I would pick 280.

Q: Do you remember the prices you got for your cotton-picking?

A: One year, that's not too far back. But one year I picked cotton I get 40 cents a hundred.

Q: Is that the least you ever got?

A: Yes sir. That's the least I ever got, 40 cents a hundred. That's been . . . I forget that man's name was president. ( ? ) I got 40 cents a hundred. I had two little boys then picking cotton. Me and them boys made about a dollar and twenty cents for 300 pounds of cotton.

Q: What's the most you ever got for picking cotton?

A: Well, then when you went to paying \$3.00 a hundred for it. I had done got so stiff I couldn't pick it anymore.

Q: Do you remember some of the home remedies your mother used to make up for you kids when you got sick?

A: Oh Lord, yes sir. ( ? ) Mama always went and got some kind of a weed and make us a tea, and we'd drink it.

Q: Was that for fever?

## Library of Congress

A: Yes sir, for fever. Wrap us up in weeds.

Q: Wrap up your whole body or just the part . . .

A: ( ? )

Q: Right there.

3

A: Yes sir. She'd make us tea out of different old weeds and we'd drink that.

Q: Do you remember any particular weed that she favored?

A: Let me see what name ( ? ).

Q: We've heard Bullweed.

A: No sir. They was . . . They called them, let me see, what did mother call ( ? ). I don't remember, but they was a weed growing around here.

Q: What about for mumps?

A: She went and got sardines and we eat the sardines, and then she put the turpentine in the juice and rub it on them for the mumps.

## Library of Congress

Q: What about measles?

A: Well, they had an old tea they called . . . They got ( ? ) from goats and make a tea and give you that and wrap you up.

Q: Got what from goats?

A: They called them road balls. I reckon that was the ( ? ) from the goats.

Q: Do you remember if she had some kind of pack or compresses if you had a sprain or twisted a leg or something like that?

A: No sir, I never had nothing like that.

Q: Did you ever have malaria?

A: Yes sir. We went to the doctor for the malaria. I went to Dr. ( ? ) he'd give us a big old pill and give us a little thing of Ep- some kind of salts. It would be red. We'd take that salts and then we'd--we'd take that pill and then we'd take that salts ( ? ).

Q: What about pneumonia?

A: Oh well, I ain't had pneumonia, but my sister did. We had a doctor out there then named Dr. Lewis, but it's been years ago. He'd give us ( ? ) pneumonia and he told us we'd have

## Library of Congress

to sit up all night when people cry and all like that so that's what we did. Of, course my daddy wasn't there then, he had left us. He left us ( ? ). My mother raised us.

Q: So that's why you had to work all the time...

A: All the time to help my mother.

4

Q: Did she remarry?

A: No.

Q: Did she just pick cotton?

A: Well, she picked cotton, worked for the white people, you know, ( ? ) jobs, and ( ? ) houses.

Q: Did she get some job as a maid or something like that?

A: No sir, ( ? ) she'd wash and iron.

Q: Wash and iron.

A: Yes sir.

## Library of Congress

Q: It was awful hard for just a mother with no father to make it wasn't it?

A: Oh yes sir. It was hard. That's the reason me and my sister couldn't go to school. We had help her to make a living for the other three children.

Q: Do you remember, in those really hard days, what did you eat most of the time?

A: Oh Lord, just anything we could get. Pull these wild greens.

Q: What kind of greens?

A: Wild greens. Poke salad.

Q: Tell us a little about poke salad. How would you fix it?

A: Go get it and par boil it, splain it out of there and put in a little grease, sit it up and eat it. Put a little black pepper on it. Salt.

Q: Did you all have a garden?

A: Yes sir. Sometimes.

Q: Did you have chickens or a cow?

## Library of Congress

A: No sir. We didn't own a cow. I owned a few chickens, but we didn't have no cow.

Q: What kind of house did you live in?

A: Just any kind. You could see daylight in it for a while. When it rained we had to set buckets all the way around in case the water came in from the rain. That's what kind of house we lived in.

5

Q: Did you have screen wire on your windows?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember when you got screen wire?

A: When I got screen wire is since I've been grown and married. I married in 1914.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: My mother was a widow. She moved on my husband's daddy's ( ? ) while he was ( ? ) and he had some land rented. We worked ( ? ). So I got in love with his son and I married him.

Q: Did you and your husband sharecrop most of the time?



## Library of Congress

A: Yes sir. Sharecropped, we had to.

Q: Did you start off with a pair of mules? What did you start off with when you got married?

A: Well, started off with . . . my daddy-in-law gave my husband one old mule.

Q: One old mule.

A: Yes sir, and we started off with him.

Q: Do you remember what the mule's name was?

A: Yes sir, Old Joe. We plowed Old Joe around there 'til we got able enough to buy an old horse. Then we stopped farming and went to farming on the halves and you know they were ( ? ).

Q: You farmed on the halves?

A: Yes sir.

Q: Whose farm did you sharecrop on?

## Library of Congress

A: Well, we sharecropped on some of Mrs. ( ? ) and then we would sharecrop on . . .  
My . . . he would . . . His daddy would always get the land and we would sharecrop with his  
daddy.

Q: He'd rent and you would sharecrop from him.

A: Yes sir.

Q: How many acres would he rent, do you remember?

A: No, I don't remember, but he had a lot of it. He had a lot of it with him.

6

Q: Did you trade at a commissary?

A: Yes sir.

Q: Did they have doodlum books?

A: Yes sir, they had doodlum books.

Q: Did you like those doodlum books?

## Library of Congress

A: Well, yes sir. 'Course I'd get something to eat when they get those doodlum books. Yes sir, we liked them.

Q: Did your husband get called into World War I?

A: No sir. He got called but he never did go.

Q: So then you just kept on farming.

A: Well, yes sir. We farmed on until . . . well, 'til we got too old to farm. And when we got old ( ? ) farm and gave it to younger people who needed to work more. He died. ( ? ).

Q: How many acres would your husband normally sharecrop?

A: Oh, sometimes he'd have ten, fifteen acres. About fifteen.

Q: How many bales of cotton could you make?

A: Well sometimes he'd make five, six, seven bales of cotton ( ? ). Of course, so much went to him and so much went to the man that owned the land.

Q: We've heard stories about renters and sharecroppers being cheated. Did you ever have any experiences that way?

## Library of Congress

A: Well now he would always be ( ? ) and so I had to just take what he said. I don't know whether they cheated him or not, but I know one thing. We worked hard. ( ? ). ( ? ) the Lord has blessed me these 84 years.

Q: You're 84?

A: 84 the 26th of this last month.

Q: 26th of April. 84 years old. That's remarkable.

Q: Do you remember hearing any stories about outlaw gangs around here? <unintelligible text>

A: No sir. I'm going to tell you the reason I didn't hear much of that. I was a housewife, I had a gang of children, I stayed at home all the time, and I couldn't read. So that made me ( ? ).

Q: Did you go to church?

7

A: Yes sir.

Q: What churches did you belong to?

## Library of Congress

A: Well, I . . . now I belong to 1st Baptist. I've been going here for about four forty ? years.

Q: Did you ladies have clubs or any kind of get togethers other than the church?

A: No sir, I didn't get together with them because I'd be home with the children.

Q: Did your husband belong to a lodge?

A: No sir. He didn't belong to anything like that. He was once called a Sunnite or something, but he didn't stay in there.

Q: A Sunlight?

A: Sunnite.

Q: Sunnite?

A: Yes sir, but he didn't stay in there very long. He liked to drink and play ( ? ) and drink it up.

Q: Were there some roadhouses he went to?

A: Yes sir, there were plenty of roadhouses.

Q: Was there a lot of moonshining that went on?

## Library of Congress

A: Yes sir, lot of moonshining. They used to be out on the island. But I didn't drink. I never have. ( ? ) . And I wouldn't be interested in it, but he liked it.

Q: Did he ever get into trouble with the law?

A: Yes sir. They would often arrest him and put him in jail right down here. But they would turn him out. He'd just be drunk.

Q: Did you ever get a tractor?

A: Yes sir we bought a tractor from Mr. Ralph. But it was two of them bought the tractor.

Q: Uh, huh, went in on it.

A: Yes sir. And so when they got rid of the land which their daddy left them, well, then they sold the tractor.

Q: Do you remember about when you got it? Was it after World War II?

8

A: Yes sir.

Q: Do you remember any other mules that you had?

## Library of Congress

A: No sir. The only mule that we had was the one I told you, Old Joe. And <unintelligible text> sold him, got rid of him some way. But now we had a tractor <unintelligible text> was his name ( ? ).

Q: Did you ever get a car?

A: Yes sir. He had a car. He kept that about two years ( ? ). He drank ( ? ). He got rid of our car.

Q: When did you get your first radio?

A: Oh, I got my first radio, let me see . . . oh well, I got my first radio about twenty years ago I think. I got it from this store right here. That was my first radio.

Q: Was it battery or . . . ?

A: Battery, yes sir, battery.

Q: Do you remember the Joe Louis fight?

A: Yes sir, I remember that.

Q: Did you hear it?

## Library of Congress

A: Yes sir, I heard that, but that was on somebody else's radio. I didn't have one at that time.

Q: All of you collect and . . .

A: And listen at it.

Q: How many people were there?

A: Well, there wasn't many of us there. They . . . We sat and listened at it.

Q: Who owned that radio?

A: My husband's daddy.

Q: Your husband's daddy. So several of you just got together and ...

A: And listened at it, yes sir.

Q: Were you all really proud of Joe Louis? Was he a hero?

A: Well, yes sir, I reckon so. I just listened at him fight.

Q: You had how many children?



## Library of Congress

A: I've got six living and fourteen dead.

9

Q: My goodness.

Q: Six living and fourteen dead. Did many of the fourteen who died, die when they were children?

A: All were children. The oldest that died was three years old.

Q: Is that right. Did they catch some particular disease?

A: Yes sir, had . . . the one . . . the last . . . the three-year old, she had whooping cough and it went into pneumonia.

Q: Whooping cough?

A: Whooping cough, yes sir.

Q: What was the problem with some of the others?

A: Well, some of them, you know, was, some of them wasn't at the time, and all like that.

Q: Some were early?

## Library of Congress

A: Yes sir.

Q: Did you have a midwife help you?

A: Yes sir. Then I had some doctors. But in that time, when he wasn't at the time, they didn't put them in the incubators and things like that now. He just died.

Q: Since some of your children died very early or were premature, did the midwife give you some instructions to follow so that your baby would be born healthy?

A: Yes sir. They would tell me, but, I don't know. It looks like when you lose one that you get rid of another one at that same ... when that time comes, well sometimes you lose that one too.

Q: What did the midwife tell you to do?

A: Well, they'd tell me don't work, and I had to work.

Q: Don't work?

A: And I had to work.

Q: How soon would you go back to work after you had a baby?

## Library of Congress

A: Oh, well, sometimes I worked when he was about three weeks old .

Q: Would you work right up to the day your baby was born?

A: I had to chop cotton in the day and the baby would be born that night.